

Forum: United Nations World Tourism Organization

Issue: The Question of Tourist Safety and Security

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the major economic pillars of many world countries, as admitted by more and more countries. The number of people able to afford to travel has risen not only due to personal income but also due to changes in the market supply. The world has become a so called “global village”, however not always with positive consequences. Security issues around the globe affect the tourism industry on a local as well as global level, not only by reducing demand but also by guiding it. Crime, wars, social and political unrests, environmental threats and spread of infectious diseases are just some of the most common forms of threats to safe and secure tourism, as I hereby explain:

- • **NATURAL DISASTERS:** As demonstrated by the devastating tsunami in Asia in 2004, Hurricanes Katrina in New Orleans and Wilma in Mexico in 2005, and more recently the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, nature overcomes us with its incredible forces. Climate changes cause natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes etc.) which destroy tourism infrastructure and indirectly cause important damage to local economies. They can grab hold of us at any time, in any place, in any form, and with no warning whatsoever, scaring locals and tourists alike.
- • **HEALTH CRISIS:** The invisible can often be more concerning than the visible, especially where pandemics are concerned. Different heavy diseases have threatened mankind for centuries and continue to do so. Diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, cholera, tuberculosis, hepatitis and so on are the ones that most likely affect current tourists, which can either become a victim or transmitter of the disease. The outbreak of rare, unexpected and initially unpreventable and untreatable diseases in different parts of the world, has turned passenger illness into a serious threat to the health of travelers and travel plans, as well as the threat of it spreading to epidemic and pandemic proportions through passenger air travel.
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- • **TERRORISM:** Even before 9/11 we were conscious of risks of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. But then 9/11 happened, and not only were we reminded of how interconnected our world is, we were awakened to the risks that these interconnections could bring. Terrorists seek in tourism the opportunity for large number of victims, publicity and media coverage, major economic damage and identity or national symbols destruction. Nowadays terrorists access the most advanced destruction technologies and the consequences of terrorist attacks have become more powerful and effective than ever. Recent terrorist activities have caused the rise of precautionary measures at airports and national borders, thus tourism is being affected as well.
- • **CRIME:** Crime certainly is one of the most serious threats to modern tourism. Both at individual and collective levels, direct in-destination crime against travelers seems to be increasing. There are different forms of tourism related crime actions: pick pocketing, shoplifting, rapes, murders, kidnappings, piracy to name only a few and travelers are ever-conscious of the presence of personal risk. Sadly, comfort zones are decreasing,

whereas suspicions is increasing. These realities have cast a heavy shadow over global travel and tourism playground, industry and opportunity. Accepting fear as a part of a visitor's experience to a destination is however not acceptable.

- **WAR:** There are a number of politically unstable regions and countries worldwide. Instability is caused by wars due to religious, ethnic, racial and other disputes or imbalances. Quite frequently instabilities involve regions of the Middle East, Western Balkans, Kashmir, Caucasus, Korean peninsula and some others. Those areas are not isolated unstable areas but they do present a threat to wider regions and occasionally involve military interventions, hence destabilize the country. Irrespective of their origins and backgrounds, wars impose a great impact on tourism demand, not only in close areas but also in wider areas if not on a global scale. As opposed to terrorist attacks, war breakouts affect wider regional areas and have far greater consequences on tourism than terrorism.

Mass media and other forms of modern communication technology spread information on potential risk in no time at all, meaning that after a few moments that a particular security risk appears, travel flows will change. On the other hand sometimes unconfirmed and not verified information will circle the world and cause irreparable damage to the tourism industry and destination images. Nowadays people are much more aware of security issues and their potential risk to their own safety. Even a slight threat will damage destination's image and tourists will develop a negative attitude towards visiting such destination, which results in a decrease in the number of arrivals.

KEY TERMS

Tourism: It is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or nonresidents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.

UNWTO: The World Tourism Organization is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

GCET: The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development. Addressed to governments, the travel industry, communities and tourists alike, it aims to help maximize the sector's benefits while minimizing its potentially negative impact on the environment, cultural heritage and societies across the globe.

WCTE: The World Committee on Tourism Ethics is the impartial body responsible for interpreting, applying and evaluating the provisions of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

Travel: It is the movement of people between relatively distant geographical locations, and can involve travel by foot, bicycle, car, train, boat, bus, airplane, or other means, with or without luggage, and can be one way or round trip. Travel can also include relatively short stays between successive movements.

Tourist Security: An effective security system requires well-trained personnel to carry out the

security procedures accordingly and to operate the security equipment properly guaranteeing a good stay at the tourist, the general public, and employees that can be vulnerable to robbery, assault, rape, larceny etc...

Security Personnel: Private people hired to protect the employing party's assets (property, people, equipment, money, etc.) from a variety of hazards (such as waste, damaged property, criminal activity such as theft, etc.) by using preventative measures.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Security concept is a living form which changes, grows and adapts to different environments and is undoubtedly related to the field of tourism, and has been so since its origins.

The modern travel industry emerged in 1841, when Thomas Cook organized his first travel package from Leicester to Loughborough (UK) to a temperance meeting. Based on the growth of the travel industry in the last 170 years, security elements were and still are essential part of this industry. However over the past few years, the tourism industry has been seriously undermined by the growing lack of safety and security. This factor has been identified as one of the five forces causing changes in the tourism sector in the new millennium. Crime, terrorism, food safety, health issues and natural disasters are the main areas of concern. Each time security threats occur at any popular travel destination, travel flows to and from change dramatically. It has been noticed that the latter is even more evident from the Cold War onwards. However, these issues only started to gain more visibility after the September 11th 2001 events. Since then security issues and safety procedures became an indispensable element of almost every travel we make, thus shaping global travel flows. Terrorist attacks have also been experienced in other parts of the world and they are pushing the travel industry to deal with a major travel paradigm shift, which is based on the fact that tourism security is now a key concern for travelers, who (after e.g. the Paris events of 13th November 2015 and 7th April 2017) are afraid of future terrorist attacks. It is now widely accepted by the international community that the success of the tourist industry in a particular country or region is directly linked to its ability to offer tourists a safe and pleasant visit.

One of the reasons for such strong connections between the security threats and travel flow changes are modern communication tools. Information arrives to tourists in minutes after attacks, disputes or other security related events occur, hence tourists have the opportunity of assess the level of the threat and possibly amend or cancel their travel plans.

Governments, travel agents and news media periodically issue warnings about the risks associated with international tourism. Tourists are urged to buy guidebooks and obtain vaccinations as precautions against such risks.

STATES INVOLVED

EGYPT: Used to be one of the most popular holiday destinations in the world, in recent years the Country has been rife with political turmoil, violent protests and terrorism attacks. A number of terrorist groups, including ISIS, have committed multiple deadly attacks in Egypt, targeting government officials and security forces, public venues, tourist sites, civil aviation and other modes of public transportation. Nowadays its tourism industry has been rocked by continued warnings over terror and the number of tourists visiting has decreased dramatically following the civil revolution and the attacks on foreign journalists. The Foreign Office advice to avoid all but essential air travel to Sharm el Sheikh.

UNWTO EFFORTS

UNWTO has been long working in the area of tourism, security and crisis management. In this regard, in 2011 a Toolbox for Crisis Communications in Tourism was published to help Member States to develop and implement effective crisis communication plans.

UNWTO participated in 2013 in the Closed Meeting on Tourism Security of the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). At this meeting, participating organizations stressed the relevance of tourism security and the need for synergy and coordination among programs and activities of the UN system organizations working in the field as well as other relevant actors including the private sector

The UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Safety and Security in the Middle East and North Africa, was organized in September 2014 in Cairo, Egypt. On the 12th May 2017, the integration of national security with tourism security, crisis communication and travel advisories were some of the key issues discussed at the 1st Meeting of the High Level Task Force on Tourism and Security, organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The work of the Task Force will focus on five key issues:

- 1) the integration between tourism and security;
- 2) support to the sector in setting crisis management plans and protocols;
- 3) travel advisories;
- 4) safe, secure and seamless travel including visa facilitation;
- 5) crisis communications.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

When dealing with this issue, it is important to remember that we should ensure tourist's safety not only at their destination but during the entire travel, including the journey.

One way to make travel safer and easier is through technology and understanding the impact technology has on the tourism sector. Moreover, it may be useful to maximize new opportunities to improve competitiveness of destinations and help them managing resources more effectively (e.g. through basic training courses on tourism security, specialized training courses on crisis management and crime prevention, and integrated tourism security plans through the establishment of public and private partnerships).

We must also remember that social media have a big role in this issue so it is important to use digital marketing, social media, and public relations to inform tourists about verified information, in order to avoid the possibility of non-confirmed information circling the world and causing irreparable damage to the tourism industry and to the destinations image.

CHAIR SUGGESTIONS

I truly hope this report has clarified most of your doubts and that it will be useful to prepare our committee discussions. However, I would like to remind you that this is just a starting point in order to get you aware of the issue. Now it is your turn to find out more information, keeping in mind that you represent a Country different from yours. To conclude, this is a very broad topic, so I recommend you to focus on the biggest causes of insecurity, like terrorist attacks and wars, without ignoring the other important aspects which allow you to properly analyze the whole issue.

See you soon in Cividale!

Anna

USEFULL WEBSITES:

<http://www.un.org/>

<http://www2.unwto.org/>

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

<http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/global-code-ethics-tourism>

<http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/world-committee-tourism-ethics>